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TWO

SERMONS:

THE FIRST FROM PSALM CII. 19, 20.

DELIVERED THE LORDS-DAY BEFORE THE EXECUTION OF

LEVI AMES.

WHO WAS EXECUTED AT BOSTON, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21. FOR BURGLARY. Æt. 22.

☞ This Discourse was preached at the Desire of the Criminal, who also attended on the Occasion.

THE SECOND FROM PROVERBS XVII. 25.

Preached the Lords-Day after his Execution; and designed as an Improvement of that awful Event, by Way of Caution to others.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

At the Request of many, An Account of the Exercise of his Mind, from the Time of his Condemnation, till he left the World; together with the Conversation the Author had with him as he walked with him from the Prison to the Gallows. By all which, compared with his latter Conduct, he may be thought in a judgment of Charity, to have died,

A Penitent Thief.

By SAMUEL STILLMAN, A. M.
Pastor of the First Baptist Church in BOSTON.

—TO DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE.
LUKE XXIII. 43.

BOSTON:
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SERMON I.

PSALM CII. 19, 20.

For he hath looked down from the height of his Sanctuary: From Heaven did the Lord behold the Earth:
To hear the groning of the Priſoner, to looſe thoſe who are appointed to Death.

THE youth on whoſe account I have choſen this paſſage, for the laſt time appears in this aſſembly. Before we ſhall meet here again for public worſhip, he will be numbred with the dead: That body now bound in chains, will be committed to the duſt, and his immortal ſpirit have paſſed to the throne of God, to receive an irrevocable ſentence. This circumſtance cannot fail of promoting an uncommon ſolemnity through this great congregation, and of exciting compaſſion towards the priſoner in every humane breaſt. A ſmile on any countenance on this occaſion, will be looked upon as an evidence of a want of humanity. And I take it for granted, that thoſe of you who have believed in Jeſus, who know the conſolations which his religion affords, and are acquainted with the value of an immortal ſoul, will aſſiſt the preacher by

by your prayers; that the word may be ſpoken as becomes the oracles of God, and prove of infinite advantage to the multitude, and eſpecially to this poor young man. If ever plainneſs, zeal, and an artleſs addreſs were neceſſary, it is now; when, amidſt a crowd of dying men, there is one, who knows not only the day, but the hour, yea *minute* of his diſſolution. In ſuch a ſituation, where ſhall ſupport be found? Only, my brethren, in the religion of the bible; which amply declares the grace, and condeſcenſion of Jehovah, who *looked down from the height of his ſanctuary: From heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groning of the priſoner, to looſe thoſe who are appointed to death.*—The very title of this pſalm diſcovers its ſuitableneſs to the preſent occaſion: It is ſaid to be, "a prayer of the "afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth "out his ſoul before the Lord." We may well ſuppoſe, that this unhappy youth never knew before, ſuch an affliction as the preſent; which he hath indeed brought upon himſelf, by repeated inſtances of theft and robbery: Yet is he the object of our pity and prayers, and may be the ſubject of the free forgiveneſs of God in Chriſt; ſeeing the abounding of ſin has been exceeded by the ſuperabundance of divine grace. And admitting that the priſoner has a juſt ſenſe of his guilty condition before God, he will paſſionately adopt the language of the context, *Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee. Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble, incline thine ear unto me. My heart is ſmitten, and withered like graſs, ſo that I forget to eat my bread*, &c.

After the pſalmiſt had thus deſcribed the caſe of the afflicted, he brings to mind the following comfortable

ſortable conſiderations; ſuch as the eternity and kindneſs of the Lord, who will *regard the prayer of the deſtitute*, and *not deſpiſe their prayer*. *This*, ſays he, *ſhall be written for the generation to come; and the people who ſhall be created, ſhall praiſe the Lord.* Meaning that God's readineſs to hear the crys of his people, ſhall be duly remembred; and that all ſuch as are created anew in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhall praiſe Him for this inſtance of his condeſcenſion. And in the text he enlarges on the ſame ſubject, which he had mentioned, ver. 17. in order to ſhew that the Lord is ſo far from diſregarding the prayer of the deſtitute, that He liſtens attentively to their cry, and will grant deliverance. The Lord takes a general notice of the earth, and its inhabitants, but is particularly attentive to the mourning of *Ephraim*; or to the afflicted ſtate of his people: For the comfort of ſuch the text is evidently deſigned. In the following part of the diſcourſe I ſhall not ſtrictly confine myſelf to the primary ſenſe of the paſſage; but expect your indulgence, while I introduce ſuch reflections, as may be pertinent to this ſolemn ſcene. And,

I. Let us attend to the inſtance of complicated affliction deſcribed by the ſtrong terms, *the groning of the priſoner, and thoſe appointed to death.*

II. The truths which are here recorded for the ſupport of ſuch. *The Lord beholdeth the earth*, &c.

I. The inſtance of keen diſtreſs deſcribed by the pſalmiſt.

David, as one obſerves on the place, has a particular reſpect to the condition of believers under perſecuting princes; by whom many have been impriſoned,

impriſoned, and put to death, for their attachment to the Lord, and to the teſtimony of Jeſus: Who, according to both ſacred and profane hiſtory, have been ſenſibly ſupported, and have thereby triumphed glorioufly, to the confuſion of their enemies. B there are different ſenſes, in which it may be ſaid that mankind are *priſoners*, and *appointed to death*.

1. This, O *Ames*, is your unhappy caſe in a literal ſenſe. You have been tried by the law of your country, found guilty, received ſentence of death, and are now waiting in cloſe impriſonment, the day of your execution. In this view your condition is gloomy; my ſoul feels for you; and the crowd who behold you, evidently diſcover their ſympathy with you.

2. But there is a more awful ſenſe, in which it may be ſaid, that you, and all mankind *as ſinners* are priſoners, and appointed to death, I mean *as tranſgreſſors of the law of God, holden by the cords of iniquity, and led captive by the devil at his will.*

When JEHOVAH created man, He gave him a law to be the rule of his temper and conduct; the requiſition of which was *perfect conformity*: Which conformity involved the tempers of the heart, and the actions of the life. To this law were annexed rewards and puniſhments. He who doth the things required ſhall live by them; but he who fails in a ſingle inſtance ſhall be condemned. However ſome may trifle with the extent, and ſpirituality of the divine law, it is as true as God's exiſtence, that he *who LOOKETH ON a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery already with her IN HIS HEART.**

A luſtful

* Matth. 5. 28.

A luſtful look, obſerve, is heart adultery. Hence ſaid *Paul, I had not known luſt, except the law had ſaid, Thou ſhalt not covet.* * If we admit the truth of revelation, we ſhall find no method of evading this plain, but awful concluſion, that the law of God is *exceeding broad*, reaching to, and condemning for the irregularities, or ſins of our hearts: And that too, not only for *many* ſuch inſtances of trangreſſion, but for *one. Curſed is every one who continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them.* † To which add, *That whoever keepeth the whole law, and offendeth in one point, is guilty of all.* ‡ i. e.. He who hath broke one command, is certainly a tranſgreſſor of the law; though we ſhould ſuppoſe that there were other precepts which he had not violated. The apoſtle explains himſelf in this manner in the verſe following the words juſt read. *For He who ſaid, Do not commit adultery; ſaid alſo, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a tranſgreſſor of the law.* §

Thus from the current language of the holy ſcriptures, we learn, that the law of God reaches to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and that mankind ſtand condemned by it, for thinking evil, as well as for committing it openly. And this circumſtance eſſentially diſtinguiſhes the *divine* from *human* laws. The latter can never accuſe us for wrong tempers, but only for actions: The former have as much to do with diſpoſitions of the heart, as with any external behavior. And thus it is right it ſhould be;

* Rom. 7. 7. † Gal. 3. 10. ‡ Jam. 2. 10.
§ Ver. 11.

thus it *muſt* be, if we admit that the law of God is the tranſcript of his own nature; and that He as ſurely requires truth in the *inward part*, as that we ſhould obey Him in our lives. This we cannot poſſibly deny, while we conſider that the infinite God is of purer eyes, than to behold evil with the leaſt approbation: It is the thing his ſoul hateth. And He is ſaid *to know our thoughts afar off.*

Thus it appears that all mankind are ſhut up under the law, to the curſe of which they are moſt righteouſly expoſed: For *all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God.*

Beſides their unhappy caſe on the preceding account, they are *holden by the cords of their iniquities.* Scripture and experience unite to convince us, that ſin has *dominion* over the ſons of *Adam.* Hence it is that they go aſtray as ſoon as they are born, ſpeaking lies. The power of ſin over the fallen race, is moſt manifeſt in its *univerſal prevalence.* In every age, and in every country, vice has prevailed; while but a few have appeared to be under the influence of right tempers.

The ſacred oracles repeatedly aſſure us of this truth; and it is the plain meaning of the prophets words. * *Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the Leopard his ſpots? Then may yealſo do good, who are accuſtomed to do evil.* The former is *naturally* impoſſible, and the latter *morally* ſo; becauſe the principle of ſin has ſuch power over the minds of men, that they love it, and after it they will go. This ſhocking truth has been experienced by many, in the following reſpect, viz. when conſcience has been alarmed, and the

* Jer. 13. 23.

the ſinner obliged, in order to quiet its clamors, to make the moſt ſolemn reſolutions againſt his former conduct; he has no ſooner met with a temptation to the ſame iniquity, than he hath complied with it. Such *power* has ſin had over him, that he hath many times ſinned againſt the light of his own conſcience, and all his ſolemn reſolutions.

This powerful principle of indwelling ſin, is repreſented by an inſpired apoſtle, in the following terms; *a law in the members—the old man—the body of death.* And I may ſafely affirm, that the experience of all real believers, has been the ſame with St. *Paul*'s in this matter. They feel that ſin has the *force of a law*; and that they are too often led into captivity by it, to their own unſpeakable ſorrow.

The exiſtence of this *powerful* principle in the minds of believers, is the great cauſe of that ſpiritual warfare which they are daily carrying on, and of which they abundantly complain. In fact, while the chriſtian is at home in the body, he is in a ſtate of impriſonment; he groans earneſtly for deliverance, nor will he ever be ſatisfied till he awakes in the image of his God.

Now the great difference between the believer, and the unbeliever in this matter is, that the former feels and laments his body of ſin, and oppoſes it: The latter, is in love with ſin, and complies with its dictates. He yields to its power to his own ruin; unleſs the arm of the Lord is revealed to ſlay his enmity, and deliver him from the law in his members.

To which I add, as that which compleats the ſinner's ſad condition, that he is *led captive by the*

devil at his will. * Who is ſaid to *walk about like a roring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour.* † And to *work in the children of diſobedience*, with this malevolent intention, even *to blind their minds, leſt the light of the glorious goſpel of Chriſt, who is the image of God, ſhould ſhine unto them.* § Nor will he ever releaſe the captive, till He who is ſtronger than the ſtrong man armed, ſhall appear to diſpoſſeſs him.

In thus repreſenting mankind, I am fully authorized by the oracles of God; at preſent it may ſuffice to mention Iſa. 61. 1. where the the prophet deſcribes the office of Chriſt in the following manner; *The ſpirit of the Lord God is upon me, becauſe the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek—to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the OPENING OF THE PRISON to them who are bound.* In theſe words ſinners while in unbelief, are conſidered as *bound in priſon.*

The ſame perſons *are appointed to death.*

1. To the death of the body. The original threatning was, *In the day thou eateſt thereof, thou ſhalt ſurely die*; which has been verified from *Adam* to *Moſes*, and from *Moſes* to this time, in the dreadful havoc which death has made, among the inhabitants of the world. *The fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live forever?* No, they have ſeen corruption; and ſo muſt we who now appear in this houſe. That youth is not the only one amongſt us, appointed to death. We are all to die; though not in the ſame ignominious way with him.

But

* 2 Tim. 2. 26. † 1 Pet. 5. 8. § 2 Cor. 4. 4.

But death ſimply conſidered is of ſmall conſequence: It is ſin that gives death his ſting, and makes the guilty tremble, when he anticipates his appearance before God the Judge of all. For ſuch are,

2. Appointed to an *eternal death*, provided they ſhould abide in a ſtate of unbelief. For all who are under the law, are under the curſe; and the curſe of the law is nothing leſs, than an everlaſting baniſhment from the preſence of God, and a being ſhut up forever with infernal ſpirits!

No ſooner does the ſinner become ſenſible, that he is in this condition, ſhut up under the law, under the dominion of ſin, led captive by ſatan, and morally incapable of delivering himſelf; than he breathes out his ſoul before God, with, *Wo is to me, for I am undone—O Lord, ſhouldeſt thou be ſtrict to mark iniquity, who could ſtand?* This conviction of guilt will make the priſoner groan; for a wounded ſpirit who can bear? In this reſpect, the heart knoweth its own bitterneſs; bitterneſs it is emphatically, for any ſinner to feel the law coming home to his conſcience, in its extent and ſpirituality, by which is the knowledge of ſin; and at the ſame time have no juſt apprehenſion of the atonement; or the one glorious, and efficacious ſacrifice for ſin, Chriſt Jeſus. Diſtreſs like this he never knew before; nor could he form any proper idea of it: For now the commandment comes, ſin revives, and he dies.

We have this conviction of ſin exemplified, and the uneaſineſs of mind which reſults from it, in the conduct of the three thouſand, the jailor, &c. Who no ſooner ſaw what they were, than they cried out, *What ſhall we do?* Which introduces the

IId. Thing

IId. Thing propoſed. To conſider the truths which alone are calculated to comfort thoſe, who are in this ſituation. He *looketh down from the height of his ſanctuary; from heaven did the Lord behold the earth: to hear the groning of the priſoner, to looſe thoſe who are appointed to death.*

The Lord is ſaid to *behold the earth. Earth* here, by a figure, is put for its inhabitants, whom the Lord continually obſerves. Though He poſſeſſes infinite perfection, and would have been eternally happy in the enjoyment of Himſelf, if there had never been either angels or men; yet He condeſcends to behold human affairs. The creatures of his power, are, and ever will be the ſubjects of his laws. Theſe laws men have broken, and by ſo doing, have entirely cut themſelves off from any claim on God. Yet has He, moved ſolely by his own unmerited love, and a *ſupreme* regard to the diſplay of his glory, adjuſted a way of deliverance for the guilty, conſiſtent with all the perfections of his nature. And in the fulneſs of time *He ſent forth his Son, made of a woman.—God ſo loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in Him, might not periſh, but have everlaſting life* * Herein is the love of God manifeſted; and by this aſtoniſhing act of grace, it is apparent that He beholds the earth.

Jeſus Chriſt, who was in the boſom of the Father before time, upon his incarnation, proceeded with unremitting diligence to make an end of ſin, and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs. To accompliſh which he was made under the law, obeyed its precepts,

* John 3. 16.

cepts, and endured its penalty in the behalf of his people. *He died, the juſt for the unjuſt, that He might bring us to God.* † And now *through Him, all who believe are juſtified from all things, from which they could not be juſtified by the law of* Moſes.

This is the only truth that can give relief to a perſon under a full view of his guilt, and miſery: And by it all real believers are enabled to rejoice; accounting all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus the Lord.

I might obſerve that the Lord beholds the earth in a way of providence, *to hear the groning of the priſoner*, &c. Thus in the caſe of *Joſeph*, when his brethren had determined to take his life; the Lord interpoſed, and delivered him from their cruel deſigns. Thus it was in the deliverance of *David* from the repeated attempts of *Saul* to kill him.—Alſo in looſing *Jeremiah* when caſt into a dirty dungeon, for his fidelity in delivering the Lord's meſſage:—And in the remarkable inſtance of *Peter*, to whom the doors and gates opened of their own accord. In theſe inſtances, and many others of a like nature, we have the text exemplified, that the *Lord heareth the groning of the priſoner, and looſeth thoſe who are appointed to death.* But I ſhall rather endeavor to accommodate this part of the text, to what hath been already ſaid, relative to a ſinner, his being ſhut up under the law, ſin and ſatan. Who, ſenſible of his condition, or fully convinced that he is juſtly appointed to eternal death, groans out his ſoul before God.

The truth which only can relieve him, as juſt ſuggeſted, is the compleatneſs of redemption in Chriſt, who

† 1 Pet. 3. 18.

who is *the end of the law for righteouſneſs to every one who believeth.** Here it is of great importance for us to enquire,

1. How the Lord looſeth thoſe who in this reſpect are appointed to die.

2. What are the effects of their being ſet at liberty.

1. How doth the Lord looſe thoſe who *are appointed to death?* Senſible of their true condition, they ſtand condemned before God, cryihg guilty, guilty. They have no recommending qualifications; no appendages to their characters which recommend them as objects of the divine favor. God appears a ſovereign, and his grace free; having mercy on whom he will have mercy: And the perſon's ſenſe of his condition makes him cry, *Lord be merciful to me a ſinner:* But God is juſt whether He ſaves or rejects him.

The queſtion ſtill returns, How is he delivered from this wretched condition? I anſwer, *by the* TRUTH BELIEVED. The inſpired writers, by way of emphaſis, diſtinguiſh the doctrine of atonement by this phraſe, *the truth.* Thus the author of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews,*† *For if we ſin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of THE TRUTH, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſins,* &c. i. e. If we reject the doctrine on which he reaſons in the context, and comprehends in ver. 14. *For by one offering he hath perfected forever them who are ſanctified,* we cannot be ſaved; becauſe Chriſt hath *once ſuffered,* and there will be no other ſacrifice but his; no other Chriſt to die.

The

* Rom. 10. 4. † Heb. 10. 26.

The word *truth* is often uſed as a general term, including the whole goſpel of ſalvation ; or the compleat character of Jeſus Chriſt. And whenever it is ſpoken of as connected with eternal life, it involves the propitiation of Chriſt, or his one compleat ſacrifice for ſin.

As this *truth* is the ground of the ſinner's hope, or cauſe of rejoicing ; it muſt be obſerved, that the *truth* muſt be *believed*, or *known*, in order to preſent peace, and future happineſs. Hence ſays Chriſt, *Ye ſhall know the truth*, and *the truth*, thus known, *ſhall make you free.* * This ſentiment is of great importance, and repeatedly urged by the inſpired writers. Accordingly when Chriſt gave the commiſſion to his miniſters, this was a part of it, *Preach the goſpel—he who believeth—ſhall be ſaved.* Chriſt is the end of the law for righteouſneſs, *only* to them *who believe.* And this is the invariable tenor of the word of God. The *truth* is the ground of hope, as it reveals a compleat redemption ; and it is *by faith* that we underſtand its glory and importance, and derive peace from it. *Believing, ye rejoice*, &c.

In a word then, the ſinner is relieved from his painful ſenſe of guilt, by the truth which he is enabled to believe ; by which he is fully convinced of the glory of the perſon of Jeſus, and the fulneſs of grace in Him : And he now ſees that God is juſt, and the juſtifier of them who believe in Chriſt ; becauſe He hath brought in *everlaſting righteouſneſs*, which is unto all, and upon all them who believe.

Here a very intereſting enquiry ariſes ; viz.

* Joh. 8. 32.

2. What follows a real belief of the truth as it is in Jesus; or the sinner's being loosed from his former unhappy state?

(1.) That pleasing view which the person has when brought to believe, of the excellency of Jesus, and the infinite sufficiency of his merits, is attended with the *highest approbation* of Him, and an *immediate flight* to Him. He appears to such a soul, to be infinitely deserving of supreme affection, on account of his essential glory: Or as being the brightness of the Father's glory, and express image of his person. To such an one, He is altogether lovely, and the chiefest among ten thousand.

At the same time the sinner has such an apprehension of his compleat redemption, that he *flies* to Him, and *trusts* his immortal all in his hands. However his sins may rise like mountains, or appear to reach to the clouds; he is made to know that *where sin hath abounded, grace hath much more abounded.* And that it is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world, to save the chief of sinners. On Him with all his guilt, he rests; fully persuaded, that if God should be strict to mark iniquity, he could not stand: But that there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared.

(2.) He whom the Lord delivers from spiritual bondage, immediately upon believing, is set *at liberty from that load of guilt, which lay upon his conscience*; and he passes at once into a state *of joy and peace.* This event is not progressive; or brought about gradually; but takes place at the very time, when the soul believes in Jesus. For the truth of

this

this remark, I appeal to believers of every denomination. When you were ſet at liberty, my brethren, from the diſtreſs of a guilty conſcience, was it not by a diſcovery made to your minds, by the holy Ghoſt, of the conſiſtency, and ſufficiency of ſalvation by Chriſt? Did not the belief of that truth, at once calm your minds, and lead you to rejoice in the only begotten Son of God? And have you not always found, in your life of faith, that your comfort only can ſpring from *looking to Jeſus?* By whom the law is magnified, and made honorable; and in whom all the heirs of promiſe are compleat.

This ſentiment is abundantly taught us in the holy ſcriptures. Thus according to the words of Chriſt, which were mentioned before—*You ſhall know the truth, and the truth* thus known, yea, and as ſoon as it is known, *ſhall make you free.* This ſpiritual freedom takes place in a degree at the inſtant that the ſinner experimentally knows the truth. We read, That *being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.** As the divine righteouſneſs is the ſole matter and cauſe of juſtification before God, I conclude that the apoſtle ſpeaks here of faith as juſtifying, in *no other ſenſe,* than as it apprehends the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, and derives peace to the mind from it. Hence an eminent divine, ſuppoſes that the *comma* in this text ſhould be tranſpoſed thus; *being juſtified, by faith we have peace with God,* &c. In this reading, *peace with God,* is an effect of faith. But I mean not to inſiſt on this matter, ſeeing the ſcriptures continually aſſure us, that *peace of conſcience,* ſtands connected with the *belief of the truth:* And this ſenti-

* Rom. 5. 1.

ment is plainly taught us in the text above cited, let what will be the apoſtle's meaning in the ſentence, *juſtified by faith.*

I might run over a number of paſſages, which confirm the above remark; ſuch as *joy and peace in believing:* If in *believing*, the perſon muſt rejoice on the *ſpot* where God met with him; and the very *minute* that he believed the truth. The apoſtle *Peter* repreſents the matter thus—*Whom having not ſeen, ye love; in whom, though now we ſee him not, yet BELIEVING, YE REJOICE with joy unſpeakable, and full of glory.* *

Beſides, if this grand truth concerning the perſon and righteouſneſs of Chriſt, is not ſufficient to give peace to a conſcience wounded by a ſenſe of ſin; why did the apoſtles always propoſe it to ſuch? As we find they invariably did.

Upon the whole; when any ſinner is really bro't to believe in Jeſus, he will have an experience of that peace which paſſeth all underſtanding: For *God who commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, ſhines in his heart, to give him the light of the knowledge of his own glory in the face of Jeſus Chriſt.* †

(3.) He who really believes in the Son of God, will have extenſive views of the *malignity of ſin*, and its oppoſition to a God of infinite perfection; from which will ariſe *abſolute hatred* of it, and *unfeigned ſorrow* for it. No perſon can underſtand the *exceeding ſinfulneſs* of ſin like the believer; nor ſorrow for it, as he does. *He looketh on Him whom he hath pierced, and mourns, as one mourneth for an only ſon, and is in*

* 1 Pet. 1. 8. † 2 Cor. 4. 6.

in bitterneſs as one who is in bitterneſs for a firſt-born. * The very ſecret corruptions of his heart, which are unnoticed but by God, and his own ſoul, give him keen diſtreſs. He mourns his felt unlikeneſs to the divine character; and many times cries out in the language of St. *Paul, O wretched man that I am: who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?* †

(4.) Connected with which are his *fervent longings* after *perfect ſanctification.* He who has obtained this ſpiritual deliverance, is led to diſcover the real beauty of holineſs, as it is an eſſential perfection of the deity; without which he feels that he muſt be forever unhappy. That rectitude in which God firſt created him, he loſt by his connection with the firſt *Adam*; and became vain in his imaginations; his evil heart being darkned. So long as he remains under the ruins of the apoſtacy, he muſt be unlike to God, therefore miſerable in himſelf, and unfit for heaven; *into which nothing ſhall enter that defileth, worketh abomination, or that maketh a lie.* ‡ The man who believes in Jeſus, knows this; and can never be contented while he is unholy. Hence he often breathes out his ſoul before God in the language of the pſalmiſt, *Then ſhall I be ſatisfied, when I awake in thy likeneſs.* Welcome heaven, ſays the believer at certain ſeaſons, becauſe I ſhall there be *near* and *like* my God!

(5.) *Love to the children of God* is another evidence of this ſpiritual deliverance, or of our faith in Jeſus. *For he who loveth Him who begat, loveth them alſo who are begotten of Him.* ‖ In another place the ſame apoſtle ſpeaks ſtill ſtronger, *We know that*

* Zech. 12. 10. † Rom. 7. 24. ‡ Rev. 21. 27.
‖ 1 Joh. 5. 1.

that we have paſſed from death to life, becauſe we love the brethren. * Obſerve, the *brethren* are the perſons loved; and this religious affection is fixed on them, *ſolely* becauſe they are ſo. Or becauſe they appear to be the real diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt, who have drank into his ſpirit, and are ſtudious to be like Him in temper and conduct. It matters not whether they be rich or poor, bond or free; if brethren in the Lord, the real believer will love them in their poverty, or meanneſs of outward condition, for Jeſus ſake. And it has always been remarked, that love to the brethren has moſt prevailed, when religion has flouriſhed moſt.

(6.) Every perſon who knows the truth as it is in Jeſus, will be careful to *maintain good works.* True faith is influential, and leads him who has it, to ſearch out the will of God, and to yield obedience to every known part of his duty. *Faith*, ſays *James, without works is dead.*

(7.) Another effect of this ſpiritual deliverance is, *readineſs to diſtribute to the relief of the brethren*, when in our power. This we ſhall ſurely be ready to do, if we love them for Chriſt's ſake, and ſee that they are reduced to neceſſitous circumſtances; while we ourſelves, have all, and abound; or at leaſt, have enough for ourſelves, and ſomething to ſpare for a ſuffering brother. *For whoſo hath this world's goods, and ſeeth his brother have need, and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* †

(8.) In fine. All ſuch as are delivered from the power of darkneſs, and tranſlated into the kingdom of

* 1 John 3. 14. † 1 Joh. 3. 17.

of God's dear Son, find the truth ſufficient to ſupport them under the heavieſt afflictions. They have, in many inſtances, overcome the world, and rejoiced in death. The army of martyrs, animated by the goſpel of Chriſt, ſuffered with patience and greatneſs of mind; knowing that the ſufferings of this preſent time, were not worthy to be compared with that glory that ſhould be revealed in them. And many believers of later date, have reſigned to death, with peace and calmneſs of ſoul, which the truth of Chriſt only could inſpire; knowing that *to die would be gain.*

Having thus enlarged on thoſe truths which in my view, are of infinite importance; becauſe they ſtand connected with our preſent peace, and future happineſs; I ſhall omit thoſe reflections which ariſe naturally from the ſubject, and addreſs myſelf to the priſoner, who muſt very ſoon appear at the judgment ſeat of Chriſt. *

Unhappy *Ames*, how cutting is your condition! A youth but little turned of *twenty one*, having filled up the meaſure of his iniquity, bound with fetters,—appointed to death,—and on the verge of a vaſt eternity!——Who can bear the thought? The ſolemn day is juſt at hand, when you muſt make your exit. Time, which ſtays for no man, is on the wing, and will ſpeedily introduce *Thurſday*, the laſt of days to you.—Then you will go, whence you ſhall not return, and be unalterably fixed, either in bliſs or wo.—See, what ſin has done.—It has brought you in the bloom of life, to ignominy and death. And has expoſed

* What was delivered in the concluſion of this Diſcourſe, by way of ſolemn caution to the youth, is deferred to the ſecond Sermon.

poſed you to eternal condemnation hereafter. All proſpect of living longer than the time appointed, is cut off. I hope you will not flatter yourſelf with longer time. That which moſt concerns you is, How you may eſcape the wrath to come.—Where there is a ground of hope for the guilty ?—In anſwering this queſtion, every circumſtance demands *ſolemnity*, *faithfulneſs*, and *truth*. I would therefore attempt it as in the preſence of that God, at whoſe tribunal I know I ſhall ſhortly meet you, with the whole congregation of the living, and the dead. May the Spirit of the living God, accompany plain truth to your, and every man's conſcience !—— *Ames*, as a ſinner you are loſt. The law of God condemns you ; for it curſeth every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of it, to do them. You have gone aſtray from God even from the womb. From the fountain of corruption in your heart, have iſſued all thoſe ſins in life, which have been repeated, and inconceiveably provoking to Jehovah. The Law is *exceeding broad*, and reaches to the thoughts of your heart. It demands perfect obedience, and will accept no leſs. And as the requirement is juſt, ſo will be the puniſhment which will be finally inflicted on all unbelievers. You are wholly in the hands of a ſovereign God, without a ſingle perſonal circumſtance to plead in your favor. If He condemns you, his juſtice will remain perfect. Nor do I mean by thus addreſſing you, to ſingle you out as the only guilty individual : No, *all have ſinned, and have come ſhort of the glory of God.*

Perhaps you are ſaying, Who then can be ſaved ? Authorized by this inſpired volume, I aſſure you, that there is peace on earth, and good will to men.

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt the only begotten Son of God, hath made an end of ſin, and brought in an everlaſting righteouſneſs. He, by his obedience to the law in life, and his death upon the croſs, hath finiſhed ſuch a righteouſneſs as lays a ground of hope for the chief of ſinners. This is the matter and cauſe of acceptance with God. *By this all who believe are juſtified from all things; from which they could not be juſtified by the law of Moſes. We have redemption through the BLOOD OF CHRIST, the forgiveneſs of ſins, according to the riches of his grace.* On this glorious foundation, I have long reſted all my hopes of eternal life; nor can I act a more faithful, friendly part, than by ſetting before you, in your preſent proſpect of ſpeedy diſſolution, the ſame ground of hope.

But what will it avail either you or me, to hear of a compleat redemption, or an all-ſufficient atonement, if we are not intereſted in it? Or have no part in the matter? Remember what is written, *All who BELIEVE, are juſtified: He who BELIEVETH ſhall be ſaved; but he who BELIEVETH NOT ſhall be damned.* No perſon can derive real peace from the doctrine of atonement, but the believer: Nor ſhall any but ſuch enter into the kingdom of heaven. And no ſooner is a ſinner brought to ſee his guilt and to believe in Jeſus, than he will repent, and abhor himſelf in duſt and aſhes; for faith and repentance are inſeperably connected. Such is the well ordered plan of ſalvation, that all who are made partakers of the Redeemer's benefits, are the ſubjects of that faith which is the gift of God, and of his operation; and of that repentance which never ſhall be repented of. Of how much conſequence is it then, that you inquire how matters ſtand between God, and your ſoul?

Whether you have ever believed in the Lord Jeſus, and have had that repentance which is unto life? If you have, the truth has come with power, and the holy Ghoſt, and much aſſurance; you have been convinced of its reality and glory, have entred into the ſpirit of it.—Chriſt has appeared the only way, the truth and the life; and from a full view of your infinite unworthineſs and guilt, you have been enabled to caſt yourſelf at his feet, and to truſt your all in his hands;—knowing that you can be ſaved only upon the plan of *free forgiveneſs*. And if you are a real believer, you are made to hate ſin, heart ſin, as well as the ſins of your life, becauſe hateful in the ſight of God: And to long that God would make you holy as he is holy.——Some things like theſe you have declared to me, and to others in your confinement, as the exerciſes of your mind. May God forbid that you ſhould deceive yourſelf! May He manifeſt Himſelf unto you, as a God pardoning iniquity; yea, *your* iniquity; then will you triumph over death, the laſt enemy. Into his hands I commit you, wiſhing you an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. And as I expect to addreſs you no more in this public manner, I bid you a moſt affectionate farewel!———

SERMON II.

Preached the Lord's Day after the Execution of

LEVI AMES, &c.

PROVERBS 17. 25.

A fooliſh Son is a Grief to his Father, and Bitterneſs to her who bare him.

SOLOMON's univerſal acquaintance with men and things, was one of his great accompliſhments, by which he was fitted to write thoſe maxims, which have been found of unſpeakable advantage in life. He had ſuſtained the different relations of ſon, parent, and prince; the duties which belonged to each, he well underſtood, and carefully diſcharged. Nor could any man paint vice, with its conſequences, ſo much to the life as he.

All who read his writings, find in them the dangers of a courſe of ſin, and the ſecret methods by which the thoughtleſs are enſnared. The hazards

which

which ſurround the path of youth are pointed out, and they are called upon to avoid them, leſt they fall.——The tender connections which we form in this ſtate, and the pleaſure and pain which attend them from a diverſity of circumſtances, he was thoroughly acquainted with. As a ſon, he knew the feelings of filial affection; as a father, the yearnings of a parent's heart. Conſequently he was qualified to deſcribe the grief of a parent, when his children juſtly merit the character mentioned in the text: *A fooliſh ſon is a grief to his father, and bitterneſs to her who bare him.* This declaration implies,

I. Parental affection.

II. In conſequence of which, parents in a peculiar ſenſe are intereſted in every part of the conduct of their children; from whence ariſes, either *pleaſure* or *pain*: The latter always, when they deſerve the character of *fooliſh ſons.*

III. The import of which character I ſhall conſider; and paſs on to ſome ſuitable reflections.

Let us,

I. Animadvert a little on the nature and neceſſity of *parental affection.*

The great author of all things hath endowed the human mind with the moſt important, and delicate paſſions, ſuch as *love, fear, pity, hope,* &c. which when duly governed by reaſon and religion, prove, not only a *private*, but a *public* bleſſing. Excited by theſe, we ſeek not only our own good, but the good of others.

By

By *love* and *ſympathy*, which are public affections, we become intereſted in the ſufferings of others, and are ſtrongly urged to fly to their relief; and never fail of receiving a heart-felt pleaſure, when, by acts of kindneſs, we have reduced that load of miſery, under which a friend, a relative, yea, a *ſtranger* groaned. For as we became partakers of his infelicity, ſo we ſhare in the ſatisfaction which ariſes from his relief.

Suppoſe we ſhould meet with a perſon of an amiable character, who had been reduced by the frowns of providence, from affluent, or competent circumſtances, to penury: Whoſe modeſty, and fear of troubling his friends, had inclined him to hide his ſuffering condition: In this caſe, every man, who poſſeſſes the *ſocial affections*, would, the inſtant he became aſcertained of the above object of diſtreſs, haſten to relieve him.

Nor would I confine theſe paſſions in their exerciſe, to amiable characters: For it is a matter of experience, and of fact, that they who poſſeſs them in the greateſt degree of delicacy, have the moſt painful ſenſe of the miſeries, which mankind, by *imprudence* or *wickedneſs*, bring upon themſelves. This remark has been abundantly exemplified, in the late conduct of many ſerious and reſpectable characters in this town, towards the unhappy youth, who was executed on *Thurſday* * laſt. Who, while they deteſted his horrid, and repeated acts of iniquity, which brought him to diſgrace and death, heartily pitied him; and by various methods diſcovered a ſtrong inclination to make his few days as eaſy as poſſible. †

The

* October 21. 1773.

† I ſhould lay myſelf under a diſagreable reſtraint, were I not to take public notice of the *remarkable tenderneſs*

The paſſions are diſtinguiſhed by writers on this ſubject, into *public* and *private*: By the former are meant thoſe, which lead us to ſeek the *public good*: By the latter, ſuch as principally reſpect *perſonal happineſs*. Among theſe we find the ſtrong affections of a parent's heart.

"Man is born a weak, helpleſs, delicate creature, unprovided with food, cloathing, and whatever elſe is neceſſary for ſubſiſtence, or defence. And yet, expoſed as the infant is to numberleſs wants and dangers, he is utterly incapable of ſupplying the *former*, or of ſecuring himſelf againſt the *latter*. But though thus feeble and expoſed, he finds immediate and ſure reſources in the *affection* and *care* of his parents, who refuſe no labors, and forego no dangers, to nurſe and rear up the tender babe. By theſe powerful inſtincts, as by ſome mighty chain, does nature link the *parent* to the *child*, and form the ſtrongeſt *moral connection* on his part, before the child has the leaſt apprehenſion of it." *

This affection, like the other paſſions of the ſoul, is known by *experience*, better than by *deſcription*. The parent needs no definition of it; and thoſe who never ſuſtained that affectionate relation, cannot, by the moſt accurate deſcription, form an adequate idea

derneſs, with which the criminal was treated, from the time of his condemnation to his death, by the Gentleman, who, by the nature of his office, was obliged to ſee the law executed; together with the *many kindneſſes* he received from the particular family, in whoſe more immediate cuſtody he was: Of which I was an eye and ear witneſs.

* Fordyce's Moral Philoſophy.

dea of it. Its *neceſſity* reſults from the feeble, helpleſs ſtate of human nature on its firſt appearance; and the *nature* of it may be beſt learnt by others, from its various, and ſtriking expreſſions. For,

II. It is in conſequence of this affection that parents in a *peculiar* ſenſe become intereſted in all the circumſtances, and conduct of their children.

1. The firſt diſcovery of this tender paſſion, is emphatically deſcribed by our bleſſed Lord, *John* 16. 21. *A woman when ſhe is in travail, hath ſorrow, becauſe her hour is come: But as ſoon as ſhe is delivered of the child, ſhe remembreth no more the anguiſh, for joy that a man is born into the world.* The fondneſs of her affection for the little ſtranger, cauſeth her to forget all that ſhe *feared*, and all that ſhe *felt*.

Now the parents hearts begin to glow with this pleaſing paſſion, and they anticipate their future ſatisfaction, in the life and conduct of the child. Not thinking that the mother has brought forth for the deſtroyer; or that the object thus beloved, may break the parents hearts, and bring their heads with ſorrow to the grave.

But God hath wiſely hidden the *future* from us, that we may rightly diſcharge the duties of the *preſent*, and leave what *ſhall be* to the direction of unerring wiſdom.

Had *Adam* known that *Cain* would prove a *murderer*; or *David*, that *Abſalom* would have *rebelled* againſt him, with what grief muſt they have beheld their advances to manhood; and with what reluctance diſcharged paternal duties!—Or had the afflicted

mother

mother * of the late unhappy youth, been aſcertained, that the ſon of her womb, was to make his exit *on a gallows*, with what uneaſineſs would ſhe have obſerved his increaſing years; and how often felt in proſpect, that complicated affliction, which now diſtreſſes her! May the greatneſs of her preſent trial, effectually ſecure her from all unkind reflections.

It is a matter of gratitude, that ſuch awful events are hidden from us; if they were not, parents, inſtead of rejoicing, would have reaſon to mourn and weep, on the birth of a child. But as the matter is now circumſtanced, they give a looſe to their tender affections, which become apparent,

2. By a *prevailing anxiety* for the welfare of their children; who make a great part of domeſtic happineſs. If they are attacked by threatning ſickneſs, with what inexpreſſible ſolicitude do the parents watch every motion, and dread the conſequence; willing to bear a part of their affliction, was it poſſible. With what concern do they attend them by day and by night; never eaſy to leave them, leſt any thing ſhould be omitted, that might tend to give eaſe or relief. And when death hath appeared inevitable, how have they agonized in mind; and have been ready to cry out in the paſſionate, though unjuſtifiable language of *David*, *O Abſalom my ſon, my ſon Abſalom: Would God I* might *die for thee.*

3. This affection is alſo diſcovered by all that *coſt* and *care* with which they conduct them through the ſucceſſive ſtages of life to manhood. It is with the moſt ſenſible pleaſure, that the indulgent parent, provides

* His father died when he was two years old.

vides for the ſupport and education of his children; ſparing neither pains nor expence, in order to accompliſh them for ſome uſeful ſphere in life. Who thinks himſelf amply compenſated, when they conduct with propriety, at home and abroad.

Parents indeed, ſhould always be upon their guard in this part of their conduct, leſt exceſſive affection ſhould lead them to too great indulgence, and to exceed their ability in the manner of providing for them. The danger in this reſpect is certainly great.

4. Children may alſo be convinced of the truth now before us, by adverting to the readineſs of their parents to paſs by many improprieties of behavior; on which they put the beſt poſſible conſtruction, and cover all with a mantle of parental love; hoping, that with advancing years, they will ſee their follies, and do better. It is not one, nor two diſappointments, that can cauſe a tender parent to deny his children a part in his affections, or help in diſtreſs. Though *Abſalom*'s crime was greatly aggravated, the heart of *David* yearned towards him; and when *Abimaaz* approached him with a meſſage from *Joab*, the firſt queſtion the king aſked was, *Is the young man Abſalom ſafe?* The ſafety of a rebellious ſon, was the principal concern of *David*'s heart.

Parental affection is ſtill the ſame. Hence, though a ſon may act the part of the *prodigal*, leave his father's houſe, and ſpend his ſubſtance in riotous living; he ſhall no ſooner appear ſorry for his conduct, and ready to return; than the father, while he is yet a great way off, will run, and fall upon his neck, and kiſs him; ſaying as he goes, *This my ſon was dead,*

and is alive again; *was loſt, and is found.* Such, my young friends, is the nature of that love, which your parents have for you; and,

5. Which leads them to watch the *connections* you form in life; and to approve, or diſapprove of them, as they apprehend them calculated to ſerve, or injure you. It is an indiſputable maxim, that, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Much depends, with reſpect to moral conduct, upon the company which youth keep. It muſt therefore be the parents duty, to guard them as much as poſſible againſt ſuch as entertain *bad ſentiments*, as well as *bad practices*; for there is a certain connection between the two. Actions ariſe from principles; and when the cauſe is bad, we may reaſonably ſuppoſe that the effect will be ſo too. As the tree is, ſuch will be the fruit; we never expect to *gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thiſtles.* Parents therefore, cannot be inattentive to the company which their children keep; but will ſolemnly caution them againſt thoſe, whoſe opinions and practices, are unreaſonable and wicked. And the warmer their affections are, the more abundantly will they uſe every method of perſuaſion, to inſpire their children with a deteſtation of bad company, the bane of multitudes.

6. But I ſhall diſmiſs this part of the ſubject, which has reſpect to *mere natural affection*, by obſerving, that it commonly runs parallel with life. Hence we ſee the parents, even when advanced in years, riſing up early, and ſitting up late; and purſuing their buſineſs with unremitting diligence, in order to acquire a ſufficient fortune, to diſtribute among their children at the cloſe of life: At which ſolemn period

this

this affection has generally appeared in the moſt moving terms, in the laſt wiſhes, and affectionate farewel of the tender parent.

7. Under this head, I have only to add, That thoſe parents who know the truth as it is in Jeſus, while they are duly concerned for the *temporal intereſt* of their children, are *ſupremely* anxious about their *everlaſting ſalvation.* This we cannot expect of thoſe who have never taſted that the Lord is gracious. But ſuch as have been made ſenſible of their own danger out of Chriſt, and have been enabled to fly for refuge to the hope ſet before them, cannot be ſatisfied, tho' their children enjoy wealth and honor; if at the ſame time they have reaſon to believe, that they are in the gall of bitterneſs, and bonds of iniquity. Remaining thus, they know that they muſt be miſerable forever. A thought like this, pierces the believing parent to the heart; and animates him in the diſcharge of his duty to his children: Whom he labors to inſtruct in the great things which belong to their peace. And is always careful to accompany his inſtructions, with ſolemn prayer to God, that they may be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus.

From all that has been ſaid, we ſee that in conſequence of theſe ſtrong affections, parents, in a peculiar ſenſe, become intereſted in all the conduct and circumſtances of their children. We ſhall therefore readily admit, that *a fooliſh ſon is a grief to his father, and bitterneſs to her who bare him.*

III. The character of a *fooliſh ſon* is now to be conſidered.

By whom we are not to underſtand an *idiot*; or one who is deſtitute of common ſenſe. Many a parent would have been much more contented, if the child who has occaſioned the greateſt bitterneſs, had been born a fool; rather than to poſſeſs a ſagacious mind, and abuſe it to the purpoſes of ſin, by drinking down iniquity like water, and glorying in his ſhame. Such perſons juſtly merit the character of *fooliſh ſons*, and are evidently deſigned by the wiſe man.

Any one who will take time to examine his writings, will find that he frequently uſes the words *fools*, and *fooliſh* in the above ſenſe; that is, as deſcriptive of a wicked man; who deſpiſes God and religion, and gives a looſe to his vicious paſſions. *Fools*, ſays he, *make a mock at ſin:* Nor can the wicked diſcover more flagrant folly, than by making a mock at that, which will one day find them out to their eternal confuſion. In another place he aſſures us, that *the WISE ſhall inherit glory, but ſhame ſhall be the promotion of FOOLS.* * By the *wiſe*, ſuch are intended, who are wiſe unto ſalvation: They *ſhall inherit* that *glory* which God will ultimately reveal—and by *fools* he means thoſe perſons who are profane, deſpiſers of them who are ſtrictly religious; and who are determined to gratify their vicious inclinations, at all events. *Shame ſhall be their promotion.* i. e. Their iniquities in this life ſhall bring them to reproach, and reproach ſhall lift them up to the public view; and in the world to come, they ſhall be forever ſeparated from that glory, which the wiſe are to inherit.

In

* Prov. 3. 35.

In order, if poſſible, to bring the matter home to conſcience, I ſhall mention particular inſtances of the conduct of a *fooliſh* ſon; and point out his egregious folly therein.

1. The character moſt ſurely belongs to him, who rejects *parental inſtruction*, and *admonition.* Children, while young, are more eaſily brought to ſubmit to family-government, and to liſten to the inſtructions of parents, than after they are farther advanced in years: Conſequently in common occaſion much leſs grief, and anxiety to their parents at that period of life, than when they begin to extend their acquaintance, by forming new connections; and to put on the character of men, and women: Which many do too ſoon; or before they have wiſdom and prudence to ſupport it.

At this time of life, they are in the utmoſt danger of being captivated by their giddy, thoughtleſs companions; who flutter, full of life, from thing to thing, in purſuit of various ſcenes of diſſipation. A youth who finds his aſſociates left to their own diſcretion, will feel uneaſy under reſtraint, and with reluctance liſten to the advice of parents. For ſuch an opinion has he of his own underſtanding, that he believes himſelf the beſt judge of his own conduct, and that he is ſufficiently qualified to govern himſelf.

His parents he firmly believes are too rigid in their diſcipline, and too ſcrupulouſly nice about the mode of conduct. That a greater latitude of behavior can do him no harm; and that he may indulge himſelf as his companions do, without hazard.

No ſooner does he adopt the above ſentiments, than he will treat his parents with a degree of neglect. The delicacy of his natural diſpoſition, the fear of incurring their diſpleaſure, and thereby ſuſtaining a loſs by his father's laſt will; or a ſenſe of his obligation to his parents, ariſing from their indulgence; may prevent his behaving rude to their face. But at the ſame time he determines to allow himſelf greater liberties than they incline to give him. And the parents muſt be, either very inconſiderate, or void of diſcernment, not to foreſee the fatal tendency of ſuch behavior; unleſs the Lord prevent it. For though his connections may be of the *politer* ſort, and his gratifications, *faſhionable*; his folly is no leſs evident, and his deſtruction no leſs certain.

There are others who are ruder in their behavior, and more open and affrontive in their diſobedience to their parents; who treat them with unkindneſs to their faces, and reſolutely determine to gratify their paſſions.

In ſuch caſes, the parents are made to endure many hours of dejection. They ſit together, and mutually bewail their *fooliſh ſon*; and in the *bitterneſs* of their ſouls, are almoſt ready to wiſh, that he had never been born.

Could the diſobedient to parents know the heart rending expreſſions, which his conduct occaſions; or the many ſolitary hours, which the afflicted parents paſs together on his account; his heart muſt be like adamant not to relent.

The *folly* of ſuch a conduct muſt become obvious to all, who duly conſider,

(1.) That

(1.) That the parents have trod the path of life, and by experience, have learned the dangers to which their children are expoſed: Conſequently, like the ſkilful pilot, are qualified to direct them. That marriner muſt be deemed a mad man, or at leaſt very raſh and imprudent, who arriving on a dangerous coaſt, with which he is unacquainted, ſhould refuſe the directions of one who knows every place of danger. Greater is the folly of thoſe, who, though young, and inexperienced, ruſh on in their own way, regardleſs of the advice of parents.

(2.) Nor is their folly leſs apparent in thus rejecting parental inſtruction, when we conſider, that the parents are not only qualified by experience to guard them againſt the hazards of the preſent life; but that all their inſtructions ariſe from the *warmeſt, and moſt ſincere affection:* Which has been largely treated of in a former part of this diſcourſe. Hence their advice is the effect, both of *knowledge* and of *love.* What conſummate folly, and baſe ingratitude then, are thoſe children chargeable with, who turn a deaf ear to all that parents can ſay unto them!

(3.) They alſo pour contempt on the ſolemn directions of God Himſelf; who in both the old, and new teſtament, has taught the duty of filial obedience. *Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right.** The ſame exhortation is repeated elſewhere in the inſpired writings. He then who deſpiſes the word of the Lord, in this reſpect, not only diſcovers the badneſs of his heart, but expoſes himſelf to that curſe which ſhall fall on the heads of the diſobedient.

(4.) The

* Eph. 6. 1.

(4.) The folly of ſuch muſt be farther evident, while we conſider the ruinous *tendency* of this vice. It muſt be taken for granted, from that near, and agreable connection which ſubſiſts between the parent and the child, that he will wholly conſult his benefit; adviſe him to nothing that ſhall differve his reputation or intereſt, nor lay him under any unneceſſary reſtraints. If therefore, the child rejects the parent's inſtructions, it muſt be that he may indulge himſelf in things forbidden and injurious. In conſequence of which, he lays himſelf open to numberleſs temptations; and there is every reaſon to fear his ruin. For when neceſſary reſtraint is removed, he will be likely to be hurried by the impetuoſity of his paſſions into every extreme. Many times did I hear the late *unhappy youth* declare, that had he "regarded the advice of a tender mother, he ſhould not have come to ſuch an awful end." Nor was he the firſt, who reflected on himſelf for his *diſobedience* to parents.

2. He certainly is a *fooliſh ſon*, who, aided by his companions, endeavors to perſuade himſelf that *chriſtianity is a fiction.*

The cauſe of *infidelity* has many friends; ſome of whom are to be found among perſons of different ages, and characters. Their number probably is much greater than it appears to be. For every deiſt is not willing to be known; he fears a diſcovery leſt he ſhould ſuffer in intereſt or reputation. But when he has a proper opportunity, he throws off his diſguiſe, and can lampoon revealed religion as faſt as any of the company. "And wherever ſuch men fall in with the youth of pregnant ſpirits, and more liberal education; they bend all their arts to corrupt their

their minds; which are often too eaſy in receiving ill impreſſions: Eſpecially when the baits are dreſſed with wanton jollity and good humor, and the plauſible pretext of *free thinking*." Nor will deiſm want friends, ſo long as the human mind remains in its preſent ſinful condition. Yet the folly of this cauſe is *now* evident; and will be more fully diſplayed at a future period.

(1.) What folly muſt it be to reject *chriſtianity*, without a *better religion* in its ſtead: And who would not reject it, could a *better* be found? I mean a religion more *honorary* to God, and *ſafe* for man? But amidſt all thoſe who have oppoſed chriſtianity, and have been *nibbling* at that glorious ſyſtem of divine truth, where is the man who has paved the way for the rejection of it, by ſubſtituting a *better* in its place?

The chriſtians are now made to bear the imputation of *weakneſs*, or *wickedneſs*, for their attachment to the religion of Jeſus Chriſt: But ſhould they caſhier it, without a better in its ſtead, they might *juſtly* be looked upon as *conſummate fools*.

Great ſwelling words have been uſed by *free thinkers*, concerning the *religion of nature*; and the *light of reaſon* as a *ſufficient guide* to duty and happineſs. To judge rightly of which, I know of no more reaſonable, and conciſe method, than to conſult the ſtate of the *heathen* world. By ſuch conduct, we are ſoon made acquainted with the true ſtate of human nature, unaſſiſted by revelation. The *Greeks*, with all their learning, had lords many, and gods many; and worſhipped for gods the work of mens hands. They had a religion, but it was filled with idolatry, and

various practices, which evidently proved, that the light of nature in fallen man, is by no means a ſufficient guide to duty and happineſs. And I cannot but think, that the more we look into the condition of the different *heathen* nations, the more fully will the *neceſſity* of a divine revelation appear.

(2.) What *folly* muſt thoſe men be guilty of, who reject chriſtianity, without being able to *diſprove* a ſingle truth or fact?

"Do they not daily hear from the holy ſcriptures, and the doctrines of chriſtianity, of an eternity, either of happineſs and ſolacing joys, or of miſery or torments; which is to begin when this frail life doth end? Now can theſe men of jollity, give any demonſtrative evidence, that in the event they ſhall not really find it ſo? Can they prove from their principles of ſelf-evidence, that theſe are only amuſing whims, melancholy dreams, or ſcarecrows and bugbears, to frighten them from their ſinful pleaſures, and diſturb their carnal repoſe? No; though they are daring enough, yet they have not the confidence to pretend to this.

"And ought not this to awaken that reaſon wherewith men are endowed, at leaſt to ponder deliberately the weighty arguments of moral evidence, for the truth of chriſtianity, with all the impartiality they can? If there is an hereafter, in which all muſt be ſharers eternally; either of the greateſt felicity, or the moſt dreadful miſery? If this is confidently affirmed, on the one hand, by wiſe and good men, who profeſs a full conviction of it; and on the other hand, there is no pretended evidence that it is not, or cannot be

be ſo: Is not the very poſſibility of this, enough to awaken their enquiry?" *

To *deny* the truth of chriſtianity, without *proving* it to be falſe, ſurely is not all that we are to expect from a ſett of men, who mean to be thought, the moſt *profound reaſoners*.

Can theſe men really *prove* that there never was ſuch a perſon as Jeſus Chriſt, who made his appearance near eighteen hundred years ſince? Or, that *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, *John*, *Paul*, *Peter*, &c. were fictitious.—Or, that the *former* was not crucified on mount *Calvary*; and that the *latter* never were his diſciples? Or if they admit, that ſuch perſons might have been, can they prove that they were a band of *deceivers*? And that the writings which bear their reſpective names, are fallacious?

Till this is done it muſt be the higheſt *folly* to reject Chriſt and his religion;—

(3.) Eſpecially when we conſider that he who lets go chriſtianity, is in danger of falling into abſolute *ſcepticiſm*; or of doubting about every thing, that does not come within his own notice. For in rejecting the religion of Chriſt, we reduce our creed to very few articles. If we diſbelieve the truth of chriſtianity, we deny that there ever were ſuch perſons as Chriſt and his apoſtles; that there are either good or evil angels; heaven or hell, the reſurrection of the dead, and a day of judgment. And many have doubted of the immortality of the ſoul; which, if they have been unwilling to let go entirely, they have

 however,

* WEST's introduction to the evidence of the chriſtian religion.

however, found their minds at a loſs to conceive of it, or to give credit to it. And ſhould ſuch perſons proceed ſo far in their infidelity, as to doubt whether there is a God, it would not be ſurprizing. We are told that Dr. *Tindal*, died with this awful ſentence in his mouth, *If there is a God, I hope He will have mercy on me.*—A doubt this, unworthy of a *heathen.* What happened to him, may happen to other infidels; for he who lets go chriſtianity, ſinks at once into a horrid abyſs; and finds himſelf enveloped in clouds and darkneſs.

(4.) I ſhall only add here, that it muſt be the higheſt *folly* in any perſon, to reject chriſtianity, ſeeing it furniſhes us with the beſt rules for *moral conduct*, adminiſters *ſufficient ſupports* under the *heavieſt afflictions* of the preſent life, and in the important *hour of death.*

The practical principles of revealed religion are many; it may ſuffice to mention the following, viz. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and mind, and ſoul, and ſtrength; and thy neighbour as thy ſelf.* Supreme love to God, and a due regard to our neighbour, will always have an important influence on our practice; by leading us to ſeek to pleaſe the former, and to relieve the latter. Our duty in the laſt reſpect, is taught in the moſt ſtriking manner, by the account Chriſt has given us of a good *Samaritan*, who met with a certain man, on his way from *Jeruſalem* to *Jericho*, who had fallen among thieves; by whom he had been treated in the moſt cruel manner, and left half dead. The *Samaritan* no ſooner came where he was, than his humane heart glowed with compaſſion; and he lent him every help in his power,

power. Upon which Chriſt thus addreſſed the perſon, whoſe enquiry occaſioned the repetition of this ſacred ſtory,—*Go thou, and do likewiſe.** Thus, while the adorable Redeemer ſeverely cenſures the *Prieſt* and *Levite*, from whom a kinder conduct might have been expected, He highly commends the friendly behavior of the *Samaritan*, and recommends him as worthy of imitation.

We have alſo a conciſe, but compleat ſyſtem of ethics in the following ſhort paſſage; *As ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye to them likewiſe.*† We are farther taught *to do juſtly, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.* ‡ *To do good to all men*—to ſhun every vice, and to practice every virtue—to feed the hungry, to cloath the naked—to obey civil rulers, when they are the miniſters of God for good. In a word, ſuch are the rules laid down in the holy ſcriptures for the government of life, that they will, when duly obſerved, lead us to the moſt refined morality. I muſt therefore obſerve, in the words of another, That the chriſtian religion is of the utmoſt importance to all orders and degrees of men; and that the greateſt ſervice that the moſt zealous patriot can do his country, is to promote the faith, and thereby encourage the practice of the truly divine virtues, recommended by Chriſt and his apoſtles.

Of no leſs importance is revealed religion to believers in times of *great afflictions*. The ſupports which ariſe from it to ſuch, are matters of perſonal experience; and therefore are a kind of *internal* evidence in its favor. Yet it may be obſerved, that the following truths which are addreſſed to our underſtandings,

* Luke 10. † Chap. 6. 31. ‡ Micah 6. 8.

ings, are calculated to give ſuch ſupports as have been mentioned, viz. That God, by a general and particular providence, governs the world—that no events are caſual—but that all things are directed by infinite wiſdom, and ſhall terminate in the glory of God, and the beſt intereſts of his people: That all things *now* work together for good to them who love God—that our light afflictions which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding,& eternal weight of glory, &c. If theſe truths are really believed, they tend in their own nature to ſupport the afflicted, and to reconcile them to the whole of the divine conduct.

Nor do the truths of chriſtianity deſert the believer in the important *hour of death*; but in many inſtances, have enabled ſuch to exult in their expiring moments. Here I might call in a cloud of witneſſes; and in particular the noble army of martyrs riſe into view, to teſtify the truth of the above remark. They reckoned that the ſufferings of the preſent life, were not worthy to be compared with the glory which, they believed, would be revealed in them. Nor did they count their lives dear unto them, that they might finiſh their courſe with joy, and lay hold on eternal life; knowing that they had in heaven an enduring ſubſtance. The firm perſuaſion that their ſouls ſhould paſs immediately to glory upon their ſeparation from the body; and that the body ſhould riſe again in the reſurrection at the laſt day, led them to triumph over the laſt enemy, ſaying, *O death, where is thy ſting! O grave, where is thy victory!—Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt!*

The

The manner of the great *Addiſon*'s death, as related by Dr. *Young*, * is pertinent here. "After a long, and manly, but vain ſtruggle with his diſtemper, he diſmiſſed his phyſicians, and with them all hopes of life: But with his hopes of life he diſmiſſed not his concern for the living, but ſent for a youth nearly related, and finely accompliſhed, yet not above being the better for good impreſſions from a dying friend: He came; but life now glimmering in the ſocket, the dying friend was ſilent: After a decent, and proper pauſe, the youth ſaid, "Dear ſir! You ſent for me: I believe, and I hope, that you have ſome commands; I ſhall hold them moſt ſacred:" May diſtant ages not only hear, but feel, the reply! Forcibly graſping the youth's hand, he ſoftly ſaid, "See in what peace a chriſtian can die." He ſpoke with difficulty, and ſoon expired. Through grace divine, how great is man! Through divine mercy, how ſtingleſs death! Who would not thus expire?"

I the rather choſe to mention the caſe of Mr. *Addiſon*, becauſe his character is ſo well eſtabliſhed in the learned world, that no deiſt will have the effrontery, to charge him with either *weakneſs* or *ignorance*.

Upon the whole, what *folly*, my brethren, muſt they be guilty of, who reject chriſtianity, ſeeing it is of infinite importance in life and death?——I now paſs to obſerve,

3. That he is a *fooliſh ſon*, who perſiſts *in the gratification of his vicious paſſions*, regardleſs of the conſequences. The paſſions in their original ſtate were pure and regular; but by reaſon of ſin, they are tumultuous

* Conjectures on Original Compoſition.

multuous and vicious; and ſo far as they have influence, lead to ſuch methods of conduct, as are infinitely odious in the ſight of God, and deſtructive of human happineſs. An enumeration of the vices which mankind fondly countenance would produce a long, and ſhocking catalogue. Theſe are commonly ranged, by the vicious themſelves in two claſſes; the *faſhionable* and the *ſordid*: Or, the vices of gentlemen, and thoſe of the meaner rank. Men of character, as they are called, diſdain the low gratifications of the vulgar; but, alas, purſue methods of indulgence, no leſs criminal than theirs.

I am ſorry to ſay it, but it is too notorious to be contradicted, that many perſons, whom God has exalted in rank and fortune, are ſome of the warmeſt abettors of the cauſe of *infidelity*.—I would be far from throwing out any indiſcriminate reflection; knowing that there are not wanting ſome of the above character, who regard the doctrines of Chriſt. But have we not reaſon to believe that the number of ſuch is ſmall, compared with thoſe who treat the primitive and ſelf-denying doctrines of the croſs with contempt? Now what ſin can riſe higher in its malignity, than unbelief? *He who believeth not God, hath made Him a LIAR, becauſe he believeth not the record that God gave of his ſon.** Beſides, the examples of ſuch, are more powerful in their influence, by how much the more they are exalted in life.

The folly of this cauſe I have endeavored to expoſe, in ſome preceding reflections; to which may be added, that all attemps to invalidate chriſtianity, or to leſſen its authority, ſo far as they prevail, are injurious

* 1 John 5. 10.

injurious to ſociety, by removing thoſe reſtraints which are neceſſarily laid on the vicious paſſions of men. We are told in the holy ſcriptures, That *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, againſt all ungodlineſs, and unrighteouſneſs of men.* * And in many places the ſins are mentioned, which expoſe to the wrath of God. The apoſtle *Paul* tells us, That *the law was—made for the lawleſs and diſobedient, for the ungodly, and for ſinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, for man ſlayers, for whoremongers, for them who defile themſelves with mankind; for men ſtealers, for liars, for perjured perſons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to ſound doctrine.* † While theſe declarations are received as divine, they tend to curb the paſſions; or make the guilty tremble after their indulgence. But deny their authenticity; and perſuade yourſelves that they are the mere inventions of men, intended to keep the vulgar in order; and the pleaſing doctrine follows, 'That God made us with theſe paſſions, and meant that we ſhould indulge them; elſe why did He implant them'? Thus making no diſtinction between the paſſions in their *original*, and in their *preſent* ſtate, the reſtrains of conſcience are thrown off, and a door opened to live as a bad heart dictates. The *profanation* of the name of the infinite Jehovah, who is exalted above all bleſſing and praiſe, is extenuated into a mere *peccadillo*, a very ſmall fault; if not a lawful uſe of language; though it is expreſly declared, that *God will not hold him guiltleſs, who taketh His name in vain.* § So common is this vice, that the name of God is appealed to, or made uſe of on the moſt trifling occaſions; and *damnation* is often imprecated on a friend

* Rom. 1. 18. † 1 Tim. 1. 9, 10. § Exod. 20. 7.

or intimate, with all the air of good humor.—*Gaming*, however connected with a train of evils, is abundantly practiced; for which none have a greater thirſt than youth. In the firſt place it may be juſtly ſaid to be an abuſe of time: For a prevailing fondneſs for it, often leads to a neglect of buſineſs. Not only ſo, but in many inſtances to exceſſive drinking. For it would be a very dry entertainment indeed for gamſters to have neither bowle, nor glaſs. And a thouſand to one, if theſe are not uſed too freely. Nor are we without inſtances of ſuch as have ſpent their fortunes at a gaming-table, and thereby brought themſelves and families into the moſt neceſſitous condition.—When this is the caſe, and poverty comes on like an armed man; is there not the utmoſt danger, that the methods of diſhoneſty will be fallen upon to repair a ruined fortune? You cannot but have heard of perſons reputably deſcended, and liberally educated, who, having been ruined by gaming, and other vices, have finally been guilty of *forgery*, *houſe breaking*, or *highway robbery*; and have made their exit in an infamous manner. Or who, through the intereſt of their friends, have had their lives, upon condition of perpetual baniſhment.—However ſome may ſneer at this obſervation, it is indiſputably certain, that vice, as to the preſent life, as well as the future, has undone multitudes. He then muſt be guilty of the higheſt folly, who will run every hazard for the ſake of vicious indulgence.

Nor will I forbear to mention on this occaſion, that there are many, who would have us think that they deſpiſe a mean action; or have a mind too great to be guilty of one; who, notwithſtanding, by every method of intrigue, attack *female chaſtity*, and infa-

mouſly

mouſly endeavor to proſtitute it to their own vile purpoſes. In what reſpects are ſuch perſons better than he, who ſhould preſent a piſtol to your breaſt, and demand your money? Both are *robbers:* The one aſks for your caſh; and if he obtains it, the loſs may be repaired: The other makes an attempt on your honor, my female hearers, and if it is loſt, can never be regained.——But the nature of the ſubject forbids me to enlarge, leſt I ſhould put that modeſty to the bluſh, which is the ornament of both ſexes. The works of darkneſs dare not appear before the ſun.

Common drunkenneſs, lying, contempt of the day, and *worſhip* of God, *thieving*, &c. are of the number of the vices which finiſh the character of a *fooliſh ſon*, and make him a *grief to his father, and bitterneſs to her who bare him.* The folly of which muſt become obvious to all who conſider their contrariety to God, and deſtructive tendency with reſpect to men. By theſe iniquities Jehovah is offended, his anger incurred, conſcience wounded, poverty, diſeaſe, reproach, and death brought on. Sin indeed promiſes pleaſure, but ends in pain; for *the wages of ſin is death.* *

Let us now paſs to ſome reflections on the ſubject.

1. Parents, we ought always to bear in mind the important duties which we owe our children. They are parts of ourſelves, and ſtand in an intimate and dear relation to us. And from that ſtrong affection which we have for them, we cannot but be intereſted in all their conduct; mourn when they mourn, and rejoice when they rejoice. They with us, are candidates for immortality. Hence while we conſult their preſent happineſs, we ſhould be ſupreme-

* Rom. 6. 23.

ly desirous of their future felicity. What if they should gain the whole world, and loose their souls; what can they give in exchange for their souls? Our care for their bodies should always be exceeded by a concern for their future well-being. And those of us who know what real religion is, will certainly be supremely desirous, that they may be saved. Nor can we discover our affection for them, in a more proper manner, than by attending to the sacred exhortations, such as, *Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.* * Or as St. *Paul* has it, *Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: But bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* † It is our indispensible duty to endeavor to lay before them their ruin by sin; and the only way of salvation through Jesus Christ—to caution them against the vices of the day and place in which they live; and to labor to convince them of the fatal tendency of sinful gratifications. But we should be particularly careful in all our instructions, not to feed that principle of *self dependence*, which is natural to the proud heart of fallen man. To sap the very foundation of this temper, it is necessary to lay before them the spirituality, and extent of the divine law; as reaching to the sins of their hearts, and condemning them for a *single* failure. And on the other hand exhibit the divine Jesus in his glory, person, love, fulness, and sufficient redemption. Explaining the nature and necessity of faith and repentance; which are so connected in the plan of salvation, as that no sinner remaining in unbelief, can enjoy the consolation that there is in Christ *now*; or *finally* enter into the kingdom of heaven. And let us accompany family instruction,

* Prov. 22. 6. † Ephes. 6. 4.

ſtruction, with a life and converſation becoming the goſpel; for example has a powerful influence: And follow all with prayer to God, that they may be tranſlated out of darkneſs into marvelous light. It is in this caſe, as in the public diſpenſation of the goſpel; *God giveth the increaſe.* Nor ſhould religious parents be diſcouraged from a due diſcharge of their duty, by the ſeeming ſecurity or inattention of their children; for God can remove the moſt deep rooted enmity, diſpel the groſſeſt ignorance, and reclaim the moſt abandoned prodigal. *When He worketh, who ſhall let it?* Animated by this conſideration, we ſhould diligently attend to family religion; the importance of which cannot be called in queſtion by any who admit the truth, and influence of chriſtianity as it reſpects the preſent life; and as it opens the moſt glorious proſpects to believers beyond the grave.

It it probable that the preceding remarks flaſh guilty conviction, in the faces of unbelieving parents; who may now be ready to ſay, As for us, we have only been concerned for our children or ourſelves, with reſpect to the preſent life. Having contemned the goſpel of Chriſt, and treated it with intire neglect; we have only been thoughtful, what we ſhould eat, what we ſhould drink, and wherewithal we ſhould be cloathed.

The ſalvation of our own ſouls, or of the ſouls of our children, has been but ſeldom thought of. Why ſo, ye heads of families? Is the *preſent* more important than the *future?* Is a ſhort life on earth of more conſequence than an eternity hereafter? No; for it is a dictate of reaſon, that the *greater* good ſhould always be preferred to the *leſs.* Why then this unreaſonable, and wicked conduct? Ye unhappy unbelieving

believing parents, your conduct ariſes *from*, and is an evidence *of* that depravity of heart, which many of you are unwilling to admit. Nor need we be at any loſs to prove the total corruption of the human mind, while we attend to the conduct of men. By their fruit you may know them. For he who pours contempt on Chriſt and his religion, or treats them with indifference, is moſt certainly an enemy in his mind by wicked works to God. Glad ſhall I be, ſhould the ſpirit of truth, faſten a juſt ſenſe of your real condition on your minds; and take of the things of Jeſus, and ſhew them unto you. An alteration in temper and conduct, will in conſequence thereof, inſtantly take place. Then the world, and all its good things would appear to be but vanity, andChriſt and his religion, become the *one thing needful* for yourſelves and children.

2. Thoſe parents, whoſe children behave with duty and affection towards them, and who are in many reſpects their comfort, will permit me to congratulate them on ſo great a bleſſing. If *a fooliſh ſon is a grief to his father, and bitterneſs to her who bare him*; how great a pleaſure muſt reſult from children of an oppoſite character. Such youth there are, who entertain the tendereſt regards for their parents; feel for them in every difficulty, and yield the moſt chearful obedience to every juſt command. Who careſully ſtudy their parents eaſe and intereſt; and ſhun thoſe things, which they apprehend will occaſion grief. How commendable is the conduct of ſuch; and how happy the parents who are in ſuch a caſe. But what an unſpeakable addition muſt it be to the godly parents happineſs, to have reaſon to think that their children are really acquainted with Jeſus Chriſt,

and

and his divine religion. This is a bleſſing inexpreſſibly great; and when rightly viewed, fills the parents hearts with humility and gratitude. Now no fears of a future, endleſs ſeparation rack their minds; but they dwell together as in the fear of God, and rejoice in hope of eternal bleſſedneſs. Knit by the ties of nature and religion, they become *one*, in a moſt intimate ſenſe; and mutually contribute to each others felicity. Happy parents, and happy children, when both can rejoice in God their Savior.

Alas, ſays ſome aged father, or almoſt broken hearted mother; this is not my caſe. Mine is a *fooliſh ſon*, and has been a grief to me all my days. He is a prodigal—profane—diſobedient—determined to gratify his paſſions, come what may. Your condition, O afflicted parent, is grievous. May the Lord ſupport you under this heavy trial; and in his own time make the prodigal return. All things are poſſible with God.

5. It may be that ſome ſuch prodigal is here to day. If ſo, I hope conſcience has been awake, and engaged to point you out, as *Nathan* did *David*; *Thou art the man.* You trample on the moſt delicate, and ſincere affection,—you violate the moſt ſolemn obligations—you are guilty of the baſeſt ingratitude to your parents—you deſpiſe the ſacred declarations of the God who made you—you contemn the Lord of life and glory, and are ruſhing on in the greateſt haſte to final, and everlaſting deſtruction.—The way in which you are, may ſeem right to your carnal minds, but the end thereof will be the ways of death. Sin has undone many: A late melancholy inſtance is yet freſh in view. On *Thurſday* laſt many

of

of you were ſpectators of the ſhameful death of a youth in all his bloom and vigor. Would to God, that his awful end might prove a uſeful warning to the ſons of vice!—He ſeldom thought, while purſuing his baſe conduct, what would be the iſſue; and when he did, the devil and his luſts prevailed againſt every remonſtrance of conſcience. He has deſcended to the grave with ignominy, and was at laſt obliged to ſay, *What fruit have I of thoſe things, whereof I am now aſhamed?* May others ſee, and fear, and do no more ſo wickedly.

4. Such awful inſtances, among other important conſiderations, may tend to calm the minds of parents, and check their immoderate ſorrow, when the Lord is pleaſed to take away their children in infancy. Had their lives been ſpared, who can tell what methods of conduct they would have choſen, or what end they would have made? They might have acted the part of fooliſh children, and have brought their parents to the grave in ſorrow. If the Lord has ſeen it beſt to remove them, we may be ſatisfied, that his way is perfect; and that all his conduct is ordered by infinite wiſdom. Beſides, they are taken from the evil to come.

Here I ſhould have finiſhed the diſcourſe; but having been warmly ſolicited by a number of my friends, after the execution of the *unhappy youth*, to ſatisfy them and others reſpecting the ſtate of the priſoner's mind, as it appeared to me, during his confinement; and to give them ſome account of the converſation which we had together, as we walked from the priſon to the gallows; I conſented to add the following Account of the matter; in

which

which, as far as I can truſt my memory, I have truly repreſented it, and made uſe of the priſoner's own expreſſions; which I have diſtinguiſhed by ſingle *commas*.

After his condemnation, there was a remarkable concern for him on the minds of many of the children of God, both miniſters and private chriſtians; who ſeemed to be favored with an uncommon ſpirit of prayer for his ſalvation. Many ſupplications aſcended to the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt from day to day for *poor Ames*, that he might be a monument of ſovereign mercy, and die in faith. Nor was this the only way in which they diſcovered their real regards for him: He was viſited by my fathers and brethren in the miniſtry, of both town and country; and by many private chriſtians of different denominations. Kindneſſes were ſhewn him from various quarters; nor was he inſenſible of the obligations he was under to his benefactors.

Having received a meſſage from him, acquainting me that he deſired a viſit; I went to ſee him; and found him ſeemingly ſtupid, with but little to ſay. Nor did he appear to me to be ſo much affected with his condition as a *condemned malefactor*, as one would reaſonably have expected. This was the ſtate of his mind the firſt viſits I made him. I endeavored to lay before him in as plain a manner as poſſible, the nature of the divine law, under which he was as a man; and to the curſe of which he ſtood moſt juſtly expoſed for his tranſgreſſions: Knowing, that *by the law is the knowledge of ſin*. He owned that he was a great ſinner, and deſerved to be caſt off; but did not appear to have any proper views of his ſinful nature and life.—Some days after, his conſcience ſeemed to be in ſome meaſure alarmed; and he diſcovered

unuſual uneaſineſs. And aſſured me, 'that he did 'not know what to do. I have lived ſuch a life, that 'I can have no hope from that, that God will have 'mercy on me. And my time is ſo ſhort, that I can 'do no good works to go to heaven by'. Thus he was perplexed; not knowing by what method God could ſave him. An attempt was made to open the nature of the goſpel to him; or the way of ſalvation through the compleat redemption of Chriſt: And he was directed to the holy ſcriptures, as containing the whole will of God, reſpecting both the ruin and recovery; the law and goſpel.———But omitting much that paſſed, I would obſerve, that at a certain time I found him in keen diſtreſs from a ſenſe of his ſinful condition; when he declared that he ſaw himſelf, yes, ſaid he, 'I *feel* that I am loſt! I ſometimes 'think that I am given over to deſtruction, and that 'there is no mercy for me. I am undone in ſoul and 'body. If I go to the place of execution as I am 'now, they muſt drag me like a bullock to the ſlaughter. Oh, muſt I die ſo! I am like a man that made 'a great fire, and then run right into it! So I have 'done, I have run from God, and muſt be damned, 'if God won't have mercy on me! May I not have 'a little longer time than is now fixed'? At this time he appeared to have very clear views of the juſtice of God in condemning him, ſhould that be the caſe. 'I 'ſee,' ſaid he, 'that if God could damn me a thouſand 'times, He would be juſt—I never did any thing but 'ſin againſt Him'. Thus I left him, confident that neither men or angels could help him; and that God would have mercy on whom He would have mercy.

In this diſtreſſed ſtate of mind he continued until *Friday Evening* the 8th of *October*; when, according to his own account of the matter, he was unexpectedly relieved,

ed, in good measure, from his guilty fears, by *Ezek.* 36. 26, 27. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh*, &c. Upon hearing that the prisoner appeared easy in his mind, I called to see him; being desirous to know what was the occasion of it; and not without fears, lest he should compass himself with sparks of his own kindling. Upon conversing with him, he said, 'I feel my mind peaceable; such a peace 'as I never knew any thing of in my life before. I 'was turning over a little book which was put into my 'hands, and cast my eye on these words, *A new heart* 'will I give you, &c. It struck me—it came as if 'it was a promise to me. I wanted this *new heart*: 'For my heart was bad, bad indeed. This was God's 'promise. I knew that God could not lie; and 'therefore if I would not believe this, I would believe 'nothing. I was now sure that God could give me 'a new heart—Oh, that is what I most wanted. And 'I could not get it, but God hath let me see that He 'gives it.' He said several things about the grace of God in *giving* a new heart, a right spirit, &c. and particularly discovered the view he had of the enmity of his own heart against God, in the following sentence, 'I now see that I have sinned against God all 'my life, with as much *envy* as ever I killed a snake; 'which I always had the greatest hatred to'. He at this time spoke of his former contempt of the gospel with evident sorrow; and expressed his gratitude to all those, who had visited him, with a view of making him acquainted with the way of salvation through Christ. 'This,' said he, 'I never knew any thing of 'before, though I have always lived in this land where 'the gospel is.'—From the time mentioned above, till

his death, he had much to say about the words of the apostle *John*, *The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.* This seemed to dwell in his mind; and on this truth, he assured me, he rested all his hopes, or his soul, guilty as it was.

The *Saturday* morning before his death, I was with him: When he was brought into the room, I observed that his countenance appeared serene; rather pleasant. I asked him how he did as to the state of his mind: His answer was, as near as I can recollect—'Comfortable; I want to be with Christ: He is glorious, and I am sinful.'

The afternoon before his execution, I found him much terrified with the prospect of the *manner* of his death: He trembled and thus expressed himself; 'I think I see myself hanging up before the people.' But this fear soon subsided; and at his own desire, he had three christian friends to spend the night with him; by whom I have been informed of his behavior thro' the night; and the manner in which they employed their time.

When they went into his room, he had the bible in his hand; and being asked how he was, he said, 'I am easy,' and began to read the 3d chap. of *John*; and when he came to the words of Christ concerning the *new birth*, he stopped, and testified that he had reason to think, that God had given him to know by experience what that was. Said several things respecting his view of the excellency of God, and the evil of sin; and thought as far as he knew his heart, that he did love God for his own worthiness; and hate sin because contrary to God. And assured the company that he hated his own evil thoughts, and wanted to be freed from all sin. Crying out at times, 'If I am not 'right, I hope God will put me right.' 'I see, said 'he,

'he, that if I could be admitted into heaven with this 'body of sin, I could not be happy. I know I must 'be like God; I must be holy'.—He slept none all night, and at times used the following expressions—'O 'what should I do, if it was not for Jesus Christ—won-'derful, wonderful goodness and love of God! How 'have we sinned against Him!' The company prayed with him alternately; and he, at their desire, prayed also: In his address to God, he appeared sensible of his unspeakable guilt, and affected with the wonderful way of salvation by Christ: And earnestly begged that the Lord would be with him in his last hours: Nor did he forget to pray for his friends, and his enemies. In the morning he declared that he had a pleasant night, appeared resigned, and bid his friends farewel with calmness, never expecting to see them on earth again.

At 9 o'clock that morning (which was the day of his execution) at his request, I visited him. Found him solemn and composed, considering the circumstances in which he was; and had much conversation with him, in the presence of four or five persons of serious character. His views of himself, and of redemption by Christ, were the same as are mentioned before; therefore it is needless to repeat them. At this time, he more than once said, 'I hope I am 'right, and shall not deceive myself: On Christ alone 'I rest; If I perish, I will perish at his feet.'

But I come now to the conversation that I had with him, as we walked in solemn pace to the place of death.

About 2 o'clock he came out of the prison yard, attended with all the awful formalities of execution; his arms pinioned, and the halter about his neck, following the cart in which were his coffin and the ladder. Gladly would I have been excused from this painful office;

office; but the *youth*'s importunity, and a ſenſe of duty, forbid me to decline it. I therefore ſtepped up to him, and thus addreſſed him, *Ames*, how do you feel under your preſent circumſtances? The anſwer was not a little ſurprizing.—'I feel compoſed.—I 'I am not afraid—what can make me feel ſo; could 'it be if I had not a good hope?' This naturally led me to enter upon a familiar conſideration of the nature of a *good hope*. Such as that hope is the expectation of enjoying a certain good at a future period—that a *good hope* of eternal life, or happineſs hereafter is a gift of God—that it has for its foundation, the righteouſneſs of Chriſt—that the man who has a good hope has been made ſenſible of his guilt and helpleſsneſs; and from a view of Chriſt as the ground of his hope, has been enabled to fly to Him, and caſt himſelf upon Him, expecting the bleſſing hoped for wholly as a free gift; he being unworthy, and having nothing to bring as a price in his hand.—Farther, that where this divine hope is, there will be ſuch gracious exerciſes of mind as theſe,—Hatred of ſin, ſin of heart and life, becauſe of its oppoſition to God—a prevailing deſire to be perfectly free from all ſin, and like to God. With much to the ſame purpoſe, &c. He liſtened with a ſolemn attention; and when I had done, he 'ſaid—'I know that there is no other ſalvation, but 'Chriſt; on Him I reſt my ſoul; and think I can 'ſay, I hate ſin becauſe God hates it; and do long 'to be made holy—I ſee that if I had ſinned but 'once; and could live a thouſand years, and pray and 'read all that time, I could not make amends for that 'one ſin—I can have no hope but Chriſt—If ever I 'enter into heaven it will be by the free grace of God. 'It can only be by the mercy of God becauſe I never 'did a good thing in all my life: I have done no-'thing but ſin againſt God.' He

He discovered no anxiety about his body, or the death he was to die, all the way to the gallows, except once; which I think was occasioned by the falling of the end of the halter from under his arm. He catched it up and said, 'Did I ever think that I should 'have such a thing about my neck'? To which I replied, *Ames*, how could you expect any thing else from your manner of life? Did you not tell me, that you once passed the gallows with stolen goods under your arm, and thought then that you should die there, if you did not leave off stealing? 'O yes I did. True, true. But is there not yet hope for 'such a sinner? Is not the blood of Christ sufficient 'to cleanse me from all sin? On that I trust'. Several times by the way he affectionately used the words of *David*, in a short prayer to the Lord; *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts; and see what wicked way is in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!* I also observed him breathe out his soul to God, as we walked, in these words—'O Lord make me holy'.

I asked him how his *past life* appeared to him--- To which he said, 'Bad, bad beyond all account--- 'my sins frighten me, they are so many and great': But still he rested on that sacred declaration, *the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.*

He asked several questions about the way of access to God the Father through Christ; and concerning the distinction between the Father and the Son. Also whether I thought that the souls of the wicked at death, would appear before God, to receive the sentence of condemnation? Or, whether they would immediately pass to hell, and wait their doom at the day of

of judgment? To all which I answered him. The questions were asked, and the answers attended to with an astonishing composure.

He mentioned with astonishment the horrors of conscience he had been under at a certain time while in prison; and expressed his wonder at God's goodness to him, and his gratitude also that he now enjoyed such an agreable composure of mind: And would ask, 'How can it be? 'I hope I am not 'deceived!

By this time we came in sight of the gallows; I designedly took no notice of it, but watched the prisoner to see how he would behave, expecting that the sight of it would give him a shock. But he looked up, and said—'There is the gallows; 'and I shall soon know, dear sir, more than you.' I asked him how his mind was at the near approach of dissolution—'I feel composed,' said he.

We were now hindred from conversing by the pressing of the multitude, who were all desirous to be as near the prisoner as possible. Upon coming under the gallows, he was ordered to get into the cart and to stand up while the warrant for his execution was read: After which he sat down on his coffin, and I asked him, as the solemn period was at hand, when he would launch into eternity, How things appeared to him. As for his heart and life, he declared, shaking his head at the same time, that they were 'bad; dreadful bad: That he 'could have no hope, if it was not for Jesus Christ: 'But that he thought there was infinite safety in 'Him.'

I asked

I aſked him, whether he was ſenſible of this truth reſpecting Chriſt; and whether he had reaſon to think he could truſt his guilty ſoul on Him. He anſwered, 'O, yes, there is no other way; where 'elſe can I hope. I want no other hope—the *blood of Chriſt cleanſeth*, &c —O, that I may be right'—I then prayed with him, and after prayer took an affectionate leave of him: At parting, he aſſured me that his mind remained in the ſame ſtate. I then retired a few ſteps from him, leaving him to the exerciſe of his own thoughts. He laid his head on his coffin for ſome time, then kneeled down by it, and prayed ſoftly. But it now being within 15 minutes of the time fixed for his execution, he was ordered to ſtand upon his coffin: He obeyed at once. Being now tied up, and waiting the laſt minute, he addreſſed the people in a few words, 'Look at me, a ſight enough to melt a heart of 'ſtone; I am going to die for my wickedneſs: 'But the death I am to die, is nothing compared 'with the death of Jeſus Chriſt on the croſs, for 'they pierced his hands and his ſide with a ſpear. 'O take warning by me—If you were my own 'brethren, near to me as my own ſoul, I could 'only tell you to beware of ſtealing, ſwearing, 'drinking,' &c.

He aſked how long he had to live; and being told—He addreſſed himſelf in ſolemn prayer to God: Among other expreſſions I recollect the following. 'Lord have mercy on me the worſt of 'ſinners. I can only ſtand at a diſtance, and ſay God 'be merciful to me a ſinner.—Lord it is better to 'truſt in thee than to put confidence in man: It 'is better to truſt in thee, than to put confidence

'in princes. If I periſh, Lord Jeſus, I will periſh 'at thy feet; but the blood of Jeſus Chriſt cleanſ-'eth from all ſin'. There were many other expreſſions which he uſed in this his laſt addreſs to God, that appeared to me really ſuitable to his caſe. He again aſked how long he had to live, and was anſwered 5 minutes.—He deſired to know when the time was out; and looking wiſhfully at the ſun, he ſaid—'That ſun is almoſt down, but before 'it ſets, I ſhall be in eternity; where I never was'. And pulling the cap over his eyes again, he cried out, *Lord Jeſus into thy hands I commend my ſpirit*; as he finiſhed this ſentence he was turned off; and died with great eaſe.

I have only now to add, That both before, and ſince the execution of the *unhappy youth*, I made enquiry reſpecting his latter conduct; and have been informed more than once, by the family, who daily obſerved him, that they never ſaw ſo great an alteration for the better in the temper and conduct of any man, in ſo ſhort a time, as in this youth.—And as far as he had opportunity, he diſcovered a readineſs to forgive, and to do a kindneſs for his worſt enemy. Thus he ſaid he could chearfully, and heartily forgive the perſon, who, he declared, had ſworn falſely againſt him on his trial, relative to his *firſt* entring the houſe of Mr. Bicker. Nor did he only forgive him, but when any of the neighbors ſent him victuals, he ſaid, I can't eat it; carry it to A——, he wants it. This was an evidence of a chriſtian temper. Upon the whole, I cannot but think that he died a *Penitent Thief*.

Thus

Thus I have at the warm ſolicitations of ſome of my friends, given an account of the exerciſe of mind of the late *Levi Ames*. They who, with the author, think that he died in faith, will admire this diſplay of divine grace; and carefully aſcribe all the glory to God; knowing, that it is God who worketh in us to *will*, and to *do* of his own good pleaſure.

It is probable the author may have ſubjected himſelf to ſome unkind reflections, for taking ſo much notice of a profligate youth, who made his exit on a gallows. But as an evangeliſt has mentioned one penitent thief, he expects your indulgence, in the preceding narrative of another.—The moſt that can be ſaid perhaps in this matter is, That the author has made a *charitable miſtake*; this ſurely will be no great crime: Beſides, charity ſhall cover the multitude of faults.

THE END.